

MOTHERHOOD – PRACTICAL Discipleship

1 SAMUEL 1

For the last few weeks, I've preached on the subject of discipleship. Today – Mothers Day – is such an important day, that I debated on whether to continue with the theme of discipleship or speak about mothers. So I decided, "Yes."

I have heard some people object to having a day to honor mothers. It may be that...

- Your mom has passed away
- You may have had a not-so-pleasant relationship with your mom or with your own children
- You may have longed to be a mother and were not able

But all of us have or had a mother, so everyone can participate in the celebration.

Books have been written about the role of mothers in the formation of the lives of famous people as well as in the formation of nations.

George Washington

"If I have been of any service to the U.S. America, the credit all belongs to my wonderful mother.

Abraham Lincoln

"All that I am and hope to be I owe to my angel mother."

J. Edgar Hoover

Hoover's mother, Annie, was a dominant, pious woman who instilled in him a strong aversion to mothers who did not have uncompromising moral standards. The infamous Ma Barker, who raised her sons to a life of criminal mischief and bank robbery, drew much of his moral outrage. A life-long bachelor, he lived with his mother until her death at the age of nearly 80.

General Douglas MacArthur

MacArthur was the youngest of three sons, and mama's favorite. When he entered the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, his mother took a room in a nearby hotel that overlooked the

academy grounds. It is rumored that his mother used a telescope to look over into his room to make sure he was studying.

Woodrow Wilson

The twenty-eighth president of the United States was a self-proclaimed "mama's boy." When he began his political career, Wilson dropped his first name, Thomas, to use his mother's maiden name. In 1914, Wilson signed the resolution setting aside the second Sunday in May to be celebrated annually as "Mother's Day."

Mothers have had great impact in the history of America and the world. The same can be said for the history of the church. There are countless stories of the influence of mothers on the lives of sons and daughters who gave their lives to Christ.

Susannah Wesley

Susannah was the mother of John and Charles Wesley, who founded the Methodist Church and "who shook two continents for Christ.

Susannah Wesley was born as Susanna Annesley, on January 20, 1669, as the daughter of a London pastor and the youngest of 25 children. She married a young pastor named Samuel Wesley.

Ten of Susannah Wesley's nineteen children died before they were two years old, and one of her daughters was deformed. Yet Susannah wrote in her diary that all her sufferings served to "promote my spiritual and eternal good. Glory be to Thee, O Lord."

Susannah's father refused to obey an English law of 1662 forcing all clergymen to obey the Book of Common Prayer. Five thousand of these Christians, called "Nonconformists", died in English prisons for their faith.

Susannah's husband tried to remain with the Church of England. For this, his barns were burned and his own disgruntled congregation had him arrested and thrown to prison. During this time Susannah endured terrible poverty. A thief slashed the

udders of the family cow so she had to find milk for her family elsewhere.

Susannah declared, "Religion is nothing else than doing the will of God and not our own."

She home-schooled her children six hours a day. One day their roof was burned by irate parishioners. All the family escaped unharmed except for six-year-old who jumped from a window as the roof fell in.

He survived to become John Wesley the preacher and founder of the Methodists. John was later barred from most of the churches in England.

Another son, Charles Wesley, is remembered for the hundreds of hymns that have brought pleasure to churches for many years.

The story of world history and church history would not have been the same without the influence of great mothers.

And the story of redemption as recorded in the Bible is no different.

- It was Jochabed, the mother of Moses, who saved his life and provided Israel with its greatest leader.
- It was Rebekah who saw in Jacob great potential, and she got him the birthright.
- It was the godly mothers of Samson and Samuel that made them the leaders that they were.
- It was the widow of Zarephath whose obedience sustained the prophet Elijah.
- It was Ruth who put God first and became the ancestress of King David.
- It was Elizabeth, the godly wife of the priest Zechariah, who raised up the last of the prophets, John the Baptist.
- It was the young virgin Mary who gave birth to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

This morning, I want us to look at the life of just one Bible mother who serves as an example for the attitude that every Christian woman should have toward motherhood.

But before we look at Hannah, we need to set the stage.

You remember that Moses led the Israelites out of Egyptian slavery and across the desert sands from Mt. Sinai to the edge of the Promised Land.

It was right about there that the people rebelled and faltered in their faith because of the dangers they saw before them in the land of Canaan. So God caused them to wander around in the wilderness until that whole generation died off.

Following the death of Moses, Joshua led the people across the Jordan River where they defeated the inhabitants of the land and began to settle down at last as a confederation of twelve tribes.

After the death of Joshua, Judah led the people and called on each tribe to continue to follow God's instructions to destroy the inhabitants of the land. But the tribes failed to follow God's instructions. Instead, they settled down in their midst, married into their families, and soon began to practice their customs.

Judges 2.10-12

An entire generation of the nation failed to pass along the truth of the faith that Moses had taught them and, as a result, the next generation knew not the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and became victims of the temptation of idolatry.

Look what happened next and compare this to the current state of affairs in the United States.

Judges 2.13-15

God raised up individual leaders from various parts of the country to lead at different times over the next several years. These leaders were referred to as judges.

Othniel	Gideon	Jephthah
Deborah	Abimelech	Samson

Judges 21.25

In your Bible, Judges is followed by the book of Ruth – a great Mothers Day study in itself – which is followed by the book of **1 Samuel**.

And this is where we find the story of Hannah and how the faithfulness of one mother brought God's blessings on an entire nation and eventually, the whole world.

Hannah was the wife of Elkanah, and she suffered from the most debilitating and demeaning condition for any woman in her day – she was childless.

The worth of a woman was determined by the number of her offspring – mainly male offspring. If a wife was childless, her lot in life was hard. If she bore no children, she alone was blamed.

A childless woman was often divorced or, even worse, another wife was added to the household and the childless one's life became a bitter existence.

Elkanah's second wife, Peninnah, had children. And even though the Bible tells us that Hannah was the best loved wife of Elkanah (**v. 5**), Peninnah would make fun of Hannah because she had no children, making her life so miserable, that Hannah would roar like thunder. (**fret – v.6**)

Peninnah would not let up, even when they were at church (**v.7**).

At the great religious festival at Shiloh, Hannah prayed earnestly to God for a child. And she promised God that if He gave her a son, she would consecrate him to the Lord's service all his life. (**v.11**)

God answered Hannah's prayer. (**v.20**)

And when Samuel was weaned, Hannah kept her pledge. (**v.24**)

You know that it had to be hard for Hannah to give up this son for whom she had prayed so long. You wonder if she considered reneging on her promise to God.

But we find that Hannah was a person of her word, and she delivered Samuel to Eli to raise him as a child of God.

Samuel grew up to be the last of the Judges of Israel and the first in a long line of prophets.

It was Samuel who crowned the first king of Israel, Saul, and it was Samuel who anointed the greatest king of Israel, David.

One mother's faithful prayer and faithfulness in following the will of God led to the establishment of the kingdom of Israel and to the line of kings from whom would be born the Savior of the world.

We also recognize that there is one thing that Hannah knew that so many mothers just don't seem to get today.

The first ten verses of 1 Samuel 2 are a prayer of thanksgiving – a hymn of praise sung by Hannah – recognizing the greatness and the sovereignty of God over His creation and the things of earth.

It is very similar to the Magnificat of Mary following the birth of Jesus.

What Hannah and Mary celebrated in these songs of worship was not the birth of a son as their greatest reward. For them, the greatest reward of their lives was that they had a son whom they could give back to God.

Hannah recognized that this child, though an answer to her most sincere prayers, was not hers to keep. The child Samuel was a gift from God – a stewardship to which Hannah most humbly submitted, knowing that one day, she would have to give him back.

“Children are not things to be acquired, used according to time and schedule, showcased for personal satisfaction, and then put aside for personal ambition and convenience.”

Children are not ours to do with as we please. They belong to God, and we must do with them as He pleases.

Mothers are in a partnership with fathers to raise their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Parents are teachers and their children are their disciples. Discipleship begins, not at the church, but in the home.

And you don't have much time to get the job done. It begins before the child is born and never lets up for eighteen to twenty years. After that, they are no longer your disciples. You may continue to mentor them, but their relationship with God is now personal.

Proverbs 23:25 *So give your father and mother joy! May she who gave you birth be happy.*

The next verse sounds like the prayer of a concerned mother:

Proverbs 23:26 *O my son, give me your heart. May your eyes take delight in following my ways.*

A mother can greatly rejoice when she has raised a godly and righteous child.

Yet if she has understood the message of the New Testament and Jesus' teachings concerning discipleship, then she will realize that, if she has raised her children right, if she has raised them to love and to serve Christ, "their love for and devotion to Him will rightly exceed their love for and devotion to her."

William Paton Mackay

When 17-year-old William Mackay left his humble Scottish home to attend college, his mother gave him a Bible in which she wrote his name, and a verse of Scripture.

College was only the beginning of the lifestyle which saddened his godly mother. At one point he sank so low he pawned the Bible to get money for whiskey. His mother prayed for him until she died.

Eventually, Mackay became a doctor in a city hospital. One day a dying patient asked for his "book." After the man died, Mackay was curious to know what book could be so precious, and a nurse handed him the man's Bible that he had read it every day as long as he could, then kept it under his bed cover when he could no longer hold it to read.

When William MacKay looked at the inside cover of the Bible, he was surprised to find the very Bible he had pawned years before.

He went into his office and gazed again at the familiar writing, noticing many pages with underscored verses his mother had hoped he would read. After many hours in that office, Mackay knelt and prayed to God for mercy.

W.P. Mackay, the physician, later became a minister and a well-known hymn writer. One of his best known hymns is "We Praise Thee O God for the Son of Thy Love."

The Book he once treated so lightly became his most precious possession.

Discipleship is the process of sharing the Gospel with a lost person, seeing that person saved by the grace of God, then teaching that person to observe all that Jesus has taught us.

It begins in the home. When we become mothers and fathers, our most important responsibility is teaching them the things of Christ.